

Message Text

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SUBJECT: TENNESSEE WILLIAMS THEATER PRODUCTION

FOR CU/WE: USIA FOR IEU

1. TENNESSEE WILLIAMS' LATEST PLAY, "RED DEVIL BATTERY SIGN" BEGAN PUBLIC REHEARSALS DEC. 29, IN VIENNA'S ENGLISH THEATER. THE DIRECTOR/PRODUCER, FRANZ SCHAFRANEK, MADE LENGTHLY DISCLAIMERS AT THE BEHEST OF THE AUTHOR BOTH BEFORE THE PLAY BEGAN AND AT INTERMISSION,

EMPHASIZING THAT WILLIAMS, PRESENT THROUGHOUT, IS NOT YET SATISFIED WITH THE PLAY AND IS STILL REWRITING IT. THIS PROCESS OF REWORKING THE

PLAY IS EXPECTED TO CONTINUE UNTIL THE PLAY'S WORLD PREMIER NOW SCHEDULED FOR JANUARY 18. SOME 180 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE WORLD PRESS ARE EXPECTED FOR THE PREMIERE.

2. SET IN DALLAS, TEXAS, THE DRAMA IS ABOUT THE PLIGHT OF A SENATOR'S HIGHLY NEUROTIC DAUGHTER WHO MARRIED THE DIRECTOR OF A LARGE CONCERN--THE RED DEVIL BATTERY GROUP. IN THE COURSE OF HER MARRIAGE TO THE SADO-MASOCHISTIC CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SHE DISCOVERS EXISTENCE OF A LARGE INDUSTRIAL-MILITARY-POLITICAL CONSPRACY WHICH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WARS IN SOUTH EAST ASIA AND EXPLOITATION IN AMERICA. SHE ACQUIRES DOCUMENTS PROVING THE CONSPIRACY AND PLANS TO GO TO WASHINGTON WITH HER GODFATHER, AN OLD SOUTHERN JUDGE, TO TESTIFY BEFORE THE CONGRESS. WHILE WAITING FOR THE JUDGE TO DECODE THE DOCUMENTS, SHE IS KEPT IN A DALLAS HOTEL--ALL THE EMPLOYEES OF WHICH

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ARE IN THE EMPLOY OF THE RED DEVIL BATTERY COMPANY. IN THE HOTEL

BAR SHE MEETS THE HERO--KING DEL RAY--AN EX-MARIACHI BAND LEADER WHO LOST HIS GROUP BECAUSE OF THE INCAPACITATING EFFECTS OF HIS BRAIN TUMOR. UNDER SURVEILLANCE AND UNABLE TO LEAVE THE HOTEL, SHE CON-

VINCES KING TO ESCORT HER TO HER PENTHOUSE ROOM. THERE, IN STREAMS OF HYSTERICAL EXPOSITION, SHE REVEALS WHO SHE IS AND WHAT SHE HAS DISCOVERED AND HE, IN HIS CONFUSED NAIVE WAY, EXPOSES THE TRAGEDY OF HIS LIFE. THEY MAKE LOVE. THE SPELL IS BROKEN BY TWO INCID-

ENTS: THE JUDGE BRINGS WORD THAT HE HAS DECODED THE DOCUMENTS, AND THEY MUST LEAVE FOR WASHINGTON; AND KING FALLS, MAKING IT APPARENT THAT HIS TUMOR IS FATAL, HIS CONDITION WORSENING QUICKLY. SHE GETS WORD THAT THE JUDGE HAS BEEN MURDERED. SHE TRIES TO LEAVE THE HOTEL TO GET TO KING. IN THE ALLEY IN BACK OF THE HOTEL SHE IS RAPED BY A BONGO-DRUMMER PAID BY THE RED BATTERY GROUP AND NOW LEADING KING'S FORMER MARIACHI BAND. HE LEAVES HER LYING IN THE ALLEY, SHE GETS UP, RUNS TO KING WHO IS DYING. THE BONGO-DRUMMER FOLLOWS HER. HE AND KING SHOOT IT OUT. KING DIES. AS SHE SOBS OVER HIS BODY A GANG OF HELL'S ANGELS DISCOVERS HER. SHE JOINS THE GANG. IN THE LAST SCENE THEY ARE SEEN WREAKING HAVOC IN DALLAS, THROWING BOMBS, SHOUTING "BURN, BURN, BURN". ALL IS NOT HOPELESS, HOWEVER, BECAUSE THE AUDIENCE KNOWS (THROUGH DEVELOPMENT OF A SUB-PLOT) THAT KING'S DAUGHTER, WHO WAS ONCE A SINGER WITH HIS BAND AND IS NOW A HOOKER IN CHICAGO, IS PREGNANT. BECAUSE SHE WILL GIVE LIFE, HER MARRED IRISH LOVER TELLS US, KING'S LIFE WILL GO ON.

3. THUS THE DRAMA OF FAIRLY TYPICAL TENNESSEE WILLIAMS CHARACTERS IS PLAYED OUT AGAINST A HIGHLY ECLECTIC COLLAGE OF BITS AND PIECES OF POLITICAL COMMENT ABOUT THE KENNEDY ASSASSINATION, THE VIETNAM WAR AND THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX, AS WELL AS FICCTIONS SUGGESTING THE MARTHA MITCHELL AND PATRICIA HEARST STORIES, WATERGATE, AND THE LIKE. THE EFFECT IS INTENSE, AT MOMENTS HYPNOTIC, INVITING SYMBOLIC INTERPRETATIONS. EVIL SEEMS TO BE REPRESENTED BY LARGE ORGANIZATIONS, SUCH AS THE "RED DEVIL BATTERY GROUP" FINANCIAL CORPORATION, THAT FOSTERS WARS FOR PROFIT, AND PEOPLE WORKING WITH COMPUTERS, SUCH AS THE YOUNG MAN WHO SEDUCES THE HERO'S DAUGHTER. GOOD IS WHAT IS "HUMAN"--LOVE, PROCREATION, THE COURAGE AND HONESTY OF THE OLD JUDGE, PERHAPS EVEN DESTRUCTION BY STREET GANGS.

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4. IN INTERVIEWS ABOUT THE PLAY, WILLIAMS HAS CALLED IT A SOCIAL DOCUMENTARY ON THE LAST 12 YEARS OF AMERICAN HISTORY. UNDOUBTEDLY, MANY AROUND THE WORLD WILL BE GLAD TO SEE IT AS SUCH. IN EARLY LOCAL REVIEWS, THE KURIER DESCRIBES THE PLAY AS A FURIOUS AND MONSTROUS "TWILGITH OF THE GODS", "THE DEMISE OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION SHOWN ON AMERICA'S EXAMPLE"; AND DIE PRESSE WRITES THAT WILLIAMS' ATTACK IS AGAINST "THOSE WHO DEBASE AMERICA". AT THE SAME TIME, THESE REVIEWS, WHICH ARE VERY FAVORABLE TO THE PLAY

AND THE PRODUCTION, DO NOT REPEAT NOT SHOW THE CRITICISM OF U.S.
SOCIETY AS A PRINCIPAL THRUST OF "RED DEVIL BATTERY SIGN". BUCHANAN

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